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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001768

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DEA FOR OC, OI, OID, OEE, OSE, OIE
SECSTATE FOR INL/LP,AF/W
POST FOR RD AND ARD

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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH NDLEA CHAIRMAN BELLO LAFIAJI

REF: ABUJA 02168 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DEA ATTACHE SAM GAYE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (S) Summary: During an often tense November 15 meeting with DEA Attache and the Consul General, Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Chairman Bello Lafiaji continued to express his bitterness over the Ambassador and the British High Commissioner's meeting with President obasanjo regarding Nigeria's counter narcotics performance. Lafiaji boasted that at the November 9 meeting in Abuja (reftel), President Obasanjo voiced strong support for him and the NDLEA performance but stressed there must be greater cooperation between the Nigerian agency and its American and British counterparts. Consequently, Bello promised counter narcotics cooperation and provided DEA with a draft standard operating procedures (SOP) for review. End Summary.

12. (S) Joined by several of his agency's departmental directors, Lafiaji began the November 15 meeting, giving his interpretation of the November 9 meeting convened by President Obasanjo which Charge and the British High Commissioner attended (reftel). Bello rendition differed significantly from our own. The NDLEA head boasted that in defending this agency with bevy of facts and figures, he received compliments from President Obsanjo. In fact, Obasanjo expressed full confidence in Bello. Conversely, the President chided the British for complaining about a lack of NDLEA responsiveness while the British failed to share information with the NDLEA about Nigerian drug arrests in the UK. (Comment: The last time we talked to Bello, he felt his job was threatened and that he could get the axe at any moment. He now feels that his position is secure. He now has a bigger chip on his shoulder than what was there before. End comment).

13. (S) Bello did say the President called for improved cooperation and communications between NDLEA, DEA and the Brits. November 15 meeting was called for two purposes, Bello asserted. First, he wanted to "clear the air", i.e. complain about what he called the false information we provided President Obasanjo about his agency's shortcomings. Second, because he felt "betrayed" he wanted to establish a SOP for NDLEA-DEA interaction (a copy of said draft SOP has been faxed to DEA HQs).

14. (S) Returning to his first point, Bello accused DEA Attache for providing inaccurate information to the Ambassador and that the joint letter from the Ambassador and the British High Commissioner to the Nigerian Attorney General was intended to have him fired. At this point, the Consul General interrupted Bello stating that the letter was sent because of deep concerns over drug trafficking. To impute an ulterior motive was a wrong and unfortunate distraction that could divert attention away from the most important point..tackling drug traffickers and their illicit consignments. The CG also stressed that personal attack on the DEA Attache was unfair and should cease immediately. The CG repeated the points he had made in previous meetings with Bello the need to reconstitute the Joint Task Force, target and dismantle major trafficking organizations as well as make large seizures of heroin and cocaine entering or transiting Nigeria to the United States. The CG stressed that time was of the essence and that progress needed to be made quickly on these points. He said Nigeria would soon face drug certification and that the NDLEA should move decisively in these areas so that Nigeria is not found wanting. Bello responded that he called the meeting to vent out his frustrations and now was prepared to move forward on counter narcotics cooperation.

15. (S) Bello then presented DEA with a draft standard operating procedures (SOP) for review and discussion in two days. The SOP does not contain anything new. The Consul General advised Bello that a formal SOP is uncommon but that the DEA Attache would review the same and furnish comments. The Consul General further advised Bello that this 'form' of developing an SOP for the relationship between the NDLEA and DEA should not take precedent over the substantive mandate of combating the drug trade.

16. (S) Comment: Whether false bravado or reality, Bello has convinced himself that he and his record of performance have been vindicated and that he looks good in the eyes of the President. Feeling that his job is secure, he now poses these SOP. In principle, there is nothing odious about them and we will not let this become a point of contention or allow it to be used as a pretext to delay our push to revive the Joint Task Force and go after major traffickers. Notwithstanding Bello's counterproductive gamesmanship, we will continue to offer our assistance in diligently pursuing our major counter narcotics objectives. End comment
BROWNE